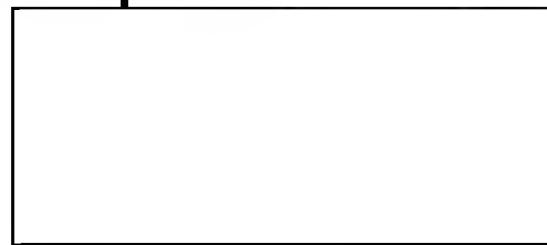


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ITALY: The government may resign.

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*ITALY: PRIME MINISTER COLOMBO'S GOVERNMENT
MAY RESIGN THIS WEEK.

CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY SECRETARY ARNALDO FORLANI TOLD AMERICAN EMBASSY OFFICIALS ON SATURDAY THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD RESIGN WITHIN THE "NEXT FEW DAYS" BECAUSE THE SMALL REPUBLICAN PARTY HAD DECIDED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE GOVERNING MAJORITY AND THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS REFUSED TO REMAIN WITHOUT THEM.

THE PARTY SECRETARY SAID IT IS NOT DESIRABLE TO FOLLOW COLOMBO'S IDEA OF ASKING--AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO EARLY CABINET RESIGNATION--FOR A FULL DEBATE ON THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUATION IN OFFICE WHEN PARLIAMENT REOPENS ON 18 JANUARY. FORLANI BELIEVES DEBATE COULD EXACERBATE THE SITUATION AND MAKE INTERPARTY NEGOTIATIONS MORE DIFFICULT.

FORLANI'S OPINION CARRIES PARTICULAR WEIGHT AT THIS TIME. HIS HANDLING OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY RIVALRIES DURING THE RECENT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS INCREASED HIS POLITICAL STATURE AND HIS INDEPENDENCE FROM HIS MENTOR, SENATE PRESIDENT FANFANI.

A CABINET CRISIS ALMOST CERTAINLY COULD NOT BE RESOLVED BY 25 JANUARY, THE PROPOSED DATE OF COLOMBO'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON. COLOMBO WOULD REMAIN AS A CARETAKER PRIME MINISTER DURING THIS PERIOD, HOWEVER, AND COULD DECIDE TO MEET THE WASHINGTON DATE IN THIS CAPACITY, ACCORDING TO THE US EMBASSY IN ROME.

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*Because of the shortage of time for preparation of this item, the analytic interpretation presented here has been produced by the Central Intelligence Agency without the participation of the Defense Intelligence Agency, Department of Defense.

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